

BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT IN COLLOQUIAL SPEECH.

Edited by G. Currie Martin, M.A., B.D., and T. H. Robinson, M.A., D.D.

NUMBER TEN.

THE BOOKS OF  
MICAHA AND  
HABAKKUK

TRANSLATED INTO COLLOQUIAL ENGLISH BY

JOHN NAYSH, M.A. (Oxon.), D.D. (Lond.)

AND

R. B. Y. SCOTT, M.A., Ph.D. (Tor.)

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NATIONAL ADULT SCHOOL UNION

30, BLOOMSBURY STREET, LONDON. W.C.1

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## EDITORS' PREFACE

SINCE the issue of the earlier numbers in this series the whole company of Old Testament students has been laid under a debt of gratitude to Dr. Moffatt for his complete translation of the Old Testament. To this we refer our readers for comparison and further enlightenment. But we feel there is still ample room for our versions.

First, there is a great convenience in being able to purchase separately any book we wish to study. Secondly, the plan of our series enables us to give introductions to each book and to provide divisions and explanatory notes to each section. Thirdly, our footnotes enable readers to see at a glance the reasons for important changes.

By the generous help of our colleagues in this enterprise, we are able to present a translation that is well within the reach of everyone, and that rests upon the best results of modern scholarship. Literary elegance has been sacrificed to clearness of expression and simplicity of language.

Micah and Habakkuk are two of the most valuable of the shorter prophetic books and are here presented in a form that should make their message more intelligible and interesting.

We are grateful for the reception given to the books previously issued, and have tried to benefit by many helpful criticisms received, for which we are thankful.

Suggestions and criticisms will be welcomed by us.

G.C.M.

T.H.R.

NOTE.—Throughout the Introduction and footnotes, MT denotes the traditional Hebrew consonantal text of the Old Testament settled by Jewish scholars about A.D. 100, but not furnished with vowel points until much later. LXX designates the "Septuagint," *i.e.*, the translation of the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek in Egypt between 275 and 100 B.C.

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# THE BOOK OF MICAH

TRANSLATED INTO COLLOQUIAL ENGLISH

WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY

JOHN NAISH, M.A. (Oxon.), D.D. (Lond.)

## *INTRODUCTION.*

THE roll of sermon-poems which follow the title MICAH in our Bibles, consists of three groups of odes. The six which make up the first three chapters are considered to be the work of Micah the Morashtite. The author is quite definitely an historical person whose home was Moresheth-Gath, a small town on the low hills to the west of Jerusalem, lying below that city about seventeen miles from it, and looking down in its turn on the plain that borders the Mediterranean south of Jaffa. The name Micah was a common one. More than a dozen people bearing it in one form or another are mentioned in the Old Testament. Our Micah is confused in 1 Kings xxii. 28 with Micaiah ben Imlah, who lived more than a hundred years earlier, in the time of Ahab (c. 850 B.C.). The introduction by a later editor states that he prophesied "in the days of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah", and in the roll of Jeremiah xxvi. 18 it is said that he "was prophesying in the days of Hezekiah, king of Judah". Micah would therefore seem to have been a younger contemporary of Amos, Isaiah of Jerusalem and Hosea, who all belong to the second half of the eighth century B.C. (750-700 B.C.), though Amos was perhaps preaching a few years earlier than the others.

Reading these poems the other day with a pupil, I remarked that Micah's god is a poor man's god. My friend said: Shouldn't we rather say that his god is a god who recognises the existence of the poor man? The distinction is valuable. These poems were written by a man who felt very deeply the worth of human personality; one to whom the invasion of the "rights" of the weak (in the worldly sense) by the strong was *the* most dreadful and deadly symptom of irreligion, that is, of insensitiveness to the divine nature of things. To all the four

eighth century prophets the traditional rights of the free cultivator as a human being—the idea expressed by the word *mishpāt*—are something inexpressibly precious. To them the maintenance of such rights is a proof that the old pure faith of the desert, once practised, as they at least believed, by their nomadic ancestors, is still living.<sup>1</sup> In the desert there had been no servile prostration before the ruler. There each clansman stood upright before his chieftain and met him palm to palm : “ Well, Jack ! ” “ Well, Tom ! ” Necessary subordination and proper discipline did not *there* imply any sense of inferiority. Each of the Lord’s chosen had there his own place, his own inviolable rights, his own jealously guarded self-respect. But, as many references in the Old Testament show us, the régime of David and Solomon in the tenth century, copied by those of Omri and Ahab, Jehu and Jeroboam II. in the ninth and eighth, had introduced a more complicated and, to the prophets, a far less religious, type of civilisation. The copy-holder of the early settlements had become a tenant-at-will, and his “ inalienable rights ” were now often ignored by the new courts and their venial magistrates. Forced labour on roads and buildings, military conscription, a heavy property tax, and imposts of various kinds on the wood, oil, and corn brought into the towns, often combined to force the smallholder into bankruptcy and slavery. The frequent regulations regarding Hebrew slaves in the codes edited by prophetic writers show how constantly this happened. Beside, there were many enclosures, deliberate stealings, of the poor men’s pasture, cornlands, and vineyards. Without money to bribe the judges it was usually impossible to obtain redress for these in the courts. Wealthy landowners,

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<sup>1</sup> The history of the Israelites before they settled in Palestine is very obscure. We have almost no contemporary evidence beyond a few scraps of primitive poems. The prophets certainly believed that their ancestors had held a very pure and chaste form of monotheistic faith during the desert period. What we know of desert folk to-day does not, perhaps, encourage us to think, as Renan did, that nomad life naturally fosters a high type of faith and morals. Be this as it may. The undoubted fact is that in the eighth century B.C. the leaders of the puritan prophetic movement in Palestine did look back with longing to what they thought had been the uncorrupted faith and dignified freedom of their patriarch forefathers. Professor Foligno has well said that it is what is believed to have happened, rather than what has actually happened, which influences the future.

too, often carried off the young wives and daughters of the peasants for their harems. The sacredness of the home was thus violated both directly and indirectly.

The peculiar nature of the Hebrew prophets' teaching lies in the fact that to them such invasions of human rights, such trampling underfoot of personal feelings by brute force, such deliberate ignoring of the claims of generosity and affection, are definitely connected with false religion. To their contemporaries, as to us, the connection was far from obvious. What had their relationship to God to do with their conduct towards men? Nothing. To Micah's insight such an answer revealed a coarse and irreligious mind. To him all life is rooted in the Great Life, which is God Himself. That Life is revealed most supremely and poignantly in the finest and best manifestations of human courage, intelligence, and affection. The brutal setting aside of the "rights"—of the delicate organisation of traditional unwritten loyalties on which each man's livelihood and security depends—is due to an insensitiveness regarding the nature of things which is itself blasphemy.

And this attitude to life explains the fierce opposition of the prophets to those forms of cult which they regarded as heathen. Amos fulminates against the worship of the heavenly bodies, and of the gods Eshmun, Dan and Dod. Hosea, in common with the writers of the Pentateuch, is scandalised by the worship of Yahweh in the form of a bull. Micah, perhaps, if one reconstruction of the difficult text of Chapter i. 10-16 be correct, denounced the universally practised cults of the village goddesses. For to the prophets such forms of worship were bound up with the new heathenism which separated the poor and the rich; which taught that if sacrifices were duly performed the oppression of the weak was a matter of indifference to the deity. The worship of Yahweh as bull or snake, his identification with Eshmun or Adonis, Dod or Dan, was unbearable just because it meant the confusion of an essentially heathen interpretation of life with the national faith of Yahweh. *His* worship is bound up with an ever-present sympathy for the other members of the community and a constant respect for their rights. Oppression and violation of justice are therefore in themselves proofs of apostasy from Yahweh. The oppressor in that very act shows himself tainted with Canaanite heathenism.

It is often felt and said that the eighth century prophets were bad economists ; as the same is said of modern teachers like Mr. James Maxton or Mr. J. A. Hobson. And in a narrow sense such criticism, offered frequently by noble-hearted and generous, but perhaps short-sighted, opponents, may seem justified. Others, again, object to the mixing of economics and religion, a view really implied in much which is said by leaders of the recognised religious groups to-day, equally as it was so in the protest against the preaching of Amos uttered by Amaziah, the official bishop of Bethel in that prophet's time. But in the outburst of Micah we see clearly that same reversal of non-religious economics which we find in the teaching of J. A. Hobson or of John Woolman, the eighteenth century American Quaker. The trampling of "rights", the ignoring of verbal or implied agreements in the interest of those who have power for the moment, the disregard of the ruin of a family, or of the destruction of an individual's faith in human loyalty—these are the proofs of irreligion. And the remedy is to be found in a conversion, a change of attitude and outlook, which will lead to a reorganisation of the whole of life—to a deliberate rejection of luxuries, and to a revaluation of values teaching us to look on the finer human virtues as the supreme asset of the state, given which we shall never be lacking in any real necessities. The meaning of the prophetic gospel, transposed into modern terms, is the substitution of co-operation for competition. Their doctrine of the desert faith and the chosen people means to us that our attitude towards our fellow-men is to be *not* "what profit for myself can I get out of this person, and after that let me throw him aside", *but* "how can I discover and train this man's particular gifts, and so find him a place where he may become a useful, happy, and self-respecting member of the community ?"

In the second group of poems we have probably a collection by various authors, written mostly during the Babylonian Exile, 600-450 B.C. In them we find the characteristic teaching regarding the *Return*, the *Messianic King* who is to restore the fortunes of the Chosen People, and the *Remnant*, the faithful few through whose loyalty redemption will be made possible. In the third group, Chapters vi. and vii., we have mainly poems written after the great marching epic of the Pentateuch, and

its sequel in the books of Samuel and Kings, had become the national inspiration. This is the period after 400 B.C., when the pious were being brought up from childhood, as Deuteronomy enjoins, to regard their whole national history as a great pilgrimage under the eyes and in the strength of Israel's God.

It is a common phenomenon in the Old Testament to find later collections added to earlier ones in the same roll. This is notably the case with the large roll called by the name of Isaiah, perhaps with that of Ezekiel also, and certainly with various other Old Testament books. The composite nature of our present roll, therefore, need cause no surprise. What is curious to the reader seeking religious inspiration and help is that much of what *we* usually regard as a necessary part of religious faith is not mentioned at all in any of these writings. The chief interest of Israel's God is assumed to be the present and future welfare of his people as a whole. He is the god of the whole earth only in the sense that, in the two later collections at least, he has power over all. The heathen non-Jews are food for destruction, or at best for conversion, mere cannon-fodder or (still worse!) propaganda-fodder. On the other hand there seems to be lacking almost entirely that sense of individual communion with God which was so prominent an element in the evangelical faith of our own grandfathers. Nor is there any mention of personal immortality. Salvation is not salvation from hell or future punishment. It is the sure conviction and reality of actual victory over sin, oppression, inferiority complex and misery, in this present life, and usually for the group, and for the individual only in a secondary sense as a member of the group and in virtue of that membership.

All this becomes clear after but a short reflection on the poems themselves. But the value of reading the prophetic writings *as they were written* lies exactly in this, that we are then obliged to throw ourselves into the minds of the prophets, and to see God and men and economic and religious relations *as they saw them*. We are not to read our own ideas into the text, as in general we have been used to do in reading the Authorised Version (great and noble model of English as it is, and sometimes conveying the meaning of the Hebrew without too much overlay of Reformation theology). From such a process we can expect no more profitable result than a mere hardening of the

ideas with which we began. Whereas the reading of the expression of another mind should lead us to a larger understanding and greater sympathy. From such a reading we *should* experience that sort of conversion by which we are led into a new mental country, shown fresh perspectives, and made to see all things from a more central and more accurate point of view and in a truer focus. Thus only can the reading of the Biblical Scriptures (or of any earnest and devout outpourings of the human mind) make us truly wise for the salvation of ourselves and of others. It may well be, of course, that we may find our own experience so different, and our consequent interpretation of the universe so alien, from that of the writers here rendered into English, that with all respect for their views and their (admittedly enormous) assumption of the god-life pervading all things, we may yet be unable to feel much reality in what they put before us or to derive much edification (as the older saints used to say) from their words. Even so it may be fairly suggested that the very effort to understand and sympathise with such deeply religious minds cannot be entirely profitless to any sincere searcher.

# MICAH

NOTE.—The Hebrew text of the Book of Micah which has come down to us is well known to be unusually full of errors and obscurities, and in order to make sense it has been necessary to compare this in many places with the Greek version called the Septuagint (LXX), which was translated in Alexandria, probably in the second century B.C., from Hebrew manuscripts at least two hundred years older, and apparently often much less corrupt, than those from which our present Hebrew text was compiled. We have also made use occasionally of the Syriac and other early versions. It has not been possible to indicate every case in which we have departed from the present Hebrew text. In general, wherever this rendering differs in sense from the English A.V. (and R.V.), the difference is due to some difficulty in the Hebrew which has been solved with the help of the early translations mentioned, especially the LXX.

*Chapter i., verse 1.*

*Introduction by the Hebrew editor of this collection of poems.*

The inspired messages from the god of Israel which came to Micah the Morashtite during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, visions which he saw concerning the fates of Samaria and Jerusalem.

## **First Poem.**

*Chapter i., verses 2-6.*

Hear, O peoples, all of you !

Listen, O land, and you with whom she is filled !

Yahweh has become a witness against you—

Yahweh himself, from his holy temple !

For see ! Yahweh is marching out from his dwelling-place,  
And he will come down upon the hill-shrines of the land,  
Then the mountain-ridges will give, and melt beneath him,  
And the valleys will crack and split.

(Like wax in front of the fire ;  
Like water flowing down a hill-side.)<sup>1</sup>

All this is because of the wrong-doing of Jacob,  
And because of the sin of the clan of Judah.  
What is the wrong-doing of Jacob—if it be not Samaria ?  
And what is Judah's sin<sup>2</sup>—if it be not Jerusalem ?

*In the following verse Yahweh Himself is apparently the speaker.*

“ And I will turn Samaria-city into plough-fields,  
Arable land fit for planting with vines ;  
I will pour down into the valley below, the stones of which she  
is built,  
And I will lay bare her foundations ! ”

*Chapter i., verses 7, 8.*

*The following lines seem to have been inserted by some Judean puritan, hater of images and of Samaria, in Ezra's time (c. 400 B.C.).*

(And all her idols shall be broken to pieces,  
And all her wooden gods shall be burnt up in the fire ;  
And all her images I will make mere ruins :  
For from the hire of a prostitute they were accumulated,  
And unto a prostitute's hire shall they return again.)

Because of this I will mourn, and I will cry aloud in my sorrow ;  
I will walk abroad stripped and naked as a sign of my grief :  
I will make a lament like the howling of jackals,<sup>3</sup>  
And a keening for death like the wailing of desert birds.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Interpolations by later editors and copyists have been placed in brackets in smaller type.

<sup>2</sup> So the Syriac version.

<sup>3</sup> The cry, ghostlike howling of jackals around a bungalow at night is familiar to all who have lived in the East.

<sup>4</sup> Some say *ostriches*, but possibly curlews, or plovers of some sort ; the Hebrew has “ daughters-of-the-waste ”.

Chapter i, verse 9.

*In the last verse the terrible march of epidemic pestilence is vividly pictured. In the East such epidemics are still regarded as the stroke of God's anger, and no attempt is made to fight them. Men can only resign themselves to death until God's fury shall be exhausted.*

Because her disease is incurable ;

Because it has penetrated as far as Judah.

It has fallen on us right up to the city-gate of my people ;

Has come to Jerusalem herself.

**Second Poem.**

Chapter i., verses 10-16.

*The following sermon-poem (as it stands in our present text<sup>1</sup>) seems to be full of plays on the names of various towns and districts—in fact, puns. These puns depend on the similarity of the sounds of the names and of certain Hebrew verb-roots. It is very difficult to reproduce them in translation. There is nothing necessarily comic in the use of puns in Eastern verse, any more than in Shakespeare. Compare :*

*Hath for the guilt of France—oh guilt indeed !*

---

<sup>1</sup> *The present text is very doubtful, and seems to have got mixed up with a number of explanatory notes, added from time to time by various readers and copyists. One great difficulty is that the word which we have translated as burgher or citizen is in the feminine form. It is possible that the original was really an ode in condemnation of the feminine deities who were unquestionably worshipped in every Israelite village in Micah's time. In this case the following, proposed by an American scholar of repute, may be more nearly what Micah really wrote. The plays on words remain as above.*

Dance not in Gath ! Wail not in Ekron !

Caress thyself, O Lady of Shaphir !

No procession maketh the Lady of Sa'anani !

Who whirled for prosperity, O Lady of Maroth,

So that evil descended from Yahweh ?

Bind the chariot to the steed, O Lady of Lachish !

For in thee are found the transgressions of Israel,

Hence thou shalt be given as dower to the conqueror of Gath !

Moreover the dispossessor shall be "My Father" to thee, O Lady of  
Maresha !

Be bald, tear out thy hair, for the sons of thy blandishments !

Enlarge thy baldness as the vulture,

For they shall go naked from thee.

Tell it not in Gath ! (GATH sounds like the Hebrew for  
TELL)

Weep ye bitterly in Bākā ! (Bākā = weep)  
In Beth-Ghofra, roll yourselves in dust ! (Ghofra = dust)  
Come across from Shāfir all naked ! (Shāfir = adorned, fair,  
here by contrast with naked)

The townsman of Sa'anān dares not come forth ;  
Beth-Ēsel is removed from its foundation.  
How shall the citizen of Māroth expect good luck ?  
For bad luck has come down from Yahweh to the gates of  
Jerusalem !

Yoke the chariot to the chariot-ponies, oh burgher of Lachish,  
For in thee are found the transgressions of Israel !

(She is the beginning of sin to the house of Sion !)

Therefore parting-gifts are given to thee, oh Moresheth-Gath ;  
Beth-Akhzib has become a snare to the kings of Israel !

I will yet bring the dispossessor to thee, oh dweller in Māreshā ;  
The glory of Israel shall be trampled under foot forever !  
Make thyself bald and shave thyself because of the children in  
whom thou delightedst ;  
Extend thy baldness like the griffon vulture, because they are  
carried from thee into exile !

### Third Poem.

*Chapter ii, verses 1-5.*

*The following poem forms the second chapter of the collection  
in our Hebrew and English Bibles. The seizing of Naboth's  
vineyard by Ahab a century earlier is an example of the  
oppressive "enclosures" of which our prophet complains here.*

Woe to those who plan wickedness as they lie on their beds !  
When daylight comes they carry it out, for they have the  
power ;  
And they long for pieces of land, and take them by force—and  
for the young wives of poor men, and carry them off ;  
And they act violently toward the peasant and his family—  
toward a man and his inherited plot.

(Therefore Yahweh declares as follows)

*The people shall be driven away as slaves, bent beneath the weight of the wooden slave-yoke.*

“ Behold, I am devising evil,

(against this clan)

From which you will not be able to withdraw your necks ;  
And you will not be able to walk upright,  
For it will be an evil time.”

“ In that day a gibe shall be cried against you ;

And a wailing shall break out as follows :

‘ The heritage of my people shall be measured out with a cord,<sup>1</sup>

And there is no one to restore it.<sup>2</sup>

Our fields are allotted to those who take us captive,

We are laid waste without remedy.’ ”

(Therefore thou shalt not have anyone casting a cord by lot in the congregation of Yahweh.)

*Chapter ii., verses 6-10.*

*Wealthy optimists, comfortably off themselves, regardless of the signs of the times, and careless of the plight of the poor, are the speakers of the next verse.*

“ Do not keep on dinning this sort of thing in our ears ;

Shame shall not overtake<sup>3</sup> the house of Jacob !

Is Yahweh angry ?<sup>4</sup>

Is this really what he will do ?

Is it not his intention,<sup>5</sup>

To bring good to Israel ? ”

*Yahweh replies to these objections.*

“ ’Tis you who are the enemy of my people,

You rise up against those who are in peace !

You strip off spoils as of warfare,

From those who are passing by in quiet confidence !

---

<sup>1</sup> So LXX.

<sup>2</sup> So LXX.

<sup>3</sup> So Syriac Version.

<sup>4</sup> So LXX.

<sup>5</sup> So LXX.

You drive out the women of my people  
From their comfortable homes !  
From their little children you are ever taking away  
The beauty of my glory for all time ! ”

*Following this, Yahweh pronounces sentence on the rich oppressors.*

“ Rise up and go ; for this is no abiding-place !  
Because of your uncleanness you shall be destroyed ; and  
your destruction shall be violent ! ”

#### **Fourth Poem.**

*Chapter ii., verses 12, 13.*

*An eight-line verse, by a later writer, adds a promise of return to Micah's threat of exile. Yahweh speaks.*

“ I will certainly gather up the whole of thee, O Jacob !  
I will surely collect together the remnant of Israel !  
I will place them like a flock in the fold,  
Like a herd in the midst of pasture lands ! ”  
The leader ram who breaks out will go up before them ;  
They shall break out, and pass the gate, and go out from it.  
Their king will pass on before them—  
Yahweh shall be at their head.

#### **Fifth Poem.**

*Chapter iii., verses 1-6.*

*The following poem is the first part of the third chapter of our Hebrew and English Bibles. The first three verses denounce the politicians and magistrates of the prophet's day as unjust and oppressors ; the next three accuse the prophets and religious leaders of insincerity ; the final verse asserts the writer's own certainty of his commission and inspiration.*

(Then he said :)

“ Listen, you headmen of Jacob,  
And you governors of the House of Israel !  
Is it not your duty to understand what each man's rights are—  
You—who are in fact haters of good and lovers of evil ? ”

“ ’Tis they who eat the flesh of my people,  
And strip off their skin from upon them.  
And their bones they lay bare and break up,  
Like meat in the pot and flesh within the cauldron.”

“ Presently they will cry aloud to Yahweh,  
But he will not listen to them ;  
And he will turn his face away from them,  
At that time, because they have done wicked deeds.”

(Thus says Yahweh :)

“ Concerning the prophets who are leading my people astray,  
Who, whilst they are eating a man’s food, foretell prosperity ;  
But whoever does not put food into their mouths,  
Against him they proclaim a crusade.”

“ Therefore it shall be visionless night for you ;  
And darkness for you without a gleam of insight.  
For the sun shall set over the prophets ;  
And the daytime shall be pitch-black around them.”

*Chapter iii., verses 7, 8.*

*Some of the prophets seem to have acted as mediums or palmists do to-day, and to have foretold the future for a fee. Such gifts of second sight are recognised as legitimate by our writer. Because they have been abused they shall be withdrawn.*

“ Then those who once had the vision shall be ashamed,  
And those who had second sight shall blush ;  
And all of them shall veil the lip in mourning,  
Because God answers them no more.”

“ But as for me myself, I am full of power,  
Of the spirit of Yahweh, of discerning men’s rights, and of  
heroic might ;  
So that I may make clear to Jacob what his fault really is,  
And to Israel the character of his sin.”

## Sixth Poem.

*Chapter iii., verses 9-12.*

*In this, the last of the six poems which scholars believe to be the work of Micah himself, the ruin of Jerusalem is predicted. Her downfall, says the prophet, will be the direct result of the corrupt conduct of political and religious leaders.*

- “ Listen to this, you heads of the House of Jacob ;  
And pay attention, magistrates of the House of Israel !  
Who cause the name of justice to be abhorred,  
And twist and pervert everything that is plain and straight-forward.  
Who build up Sion in the blood of the workers,  
And set up Jerusalem with evil-doing ! ”
- “ Her headmen sell justice for bribes ;  
And her priests give teaching for money ;  
And her prophets declare the future for silver :  
And they rely on Yahweh as their support, and say :  
‘ Is not Yahweh in our midst ?  
No evil can come upon us ! ’ ”
- “ Therefore because of you  
Sion will become a plough-field ;  
And Jerusalem will be a heap of ruins,  
And the temple-hill a mere forest-shrine.”

## Seventh Poem.

*Chapter iv., verses 1-5.*

*The next three odes are contained in Chapter iv. of our Hebrew and English Bibles. They seem to have no connection with each other, and can hardly be the work of Micah. Part of the first, verses 1-4, is also included in the roll of Isaiah (Chapter ii. verses 2-4). It foretells a coming world-wide supremacy of the Hebrew god and the Hebrew gospel of life, which will be accompanied by a golden age of righteousness and peace. Perhaps this poem was really written by one of the Jewish exiles in Babylonia about 540 B.C. We know that predictions of such a final Messianic kingdom were part of their teaching at that time. On the other hand, the idea of the*

*Golden Age is much earlier, occurs in other than Hebrew sources, and may well have been preached in Palestine before the Exile.*

It shall happen at the end of the age  
That the hill of Yahweh's temple  
Will be set firmly at the head of all mountains  
And will be lifted up above every other hill ;  
Then the heathen will flow to it like a river,  
And the pagans will come crowding there and will say :  
“ Come, and let us go up to the hill of Yahweh,  
And to the temple of the God of Jacob ;  
That he may instruct us regarding his ways,  
So that we may walk in the paths which he has planned ;  
For Sion is the source of the true teaching,  
And the word of Yahweh comes from Jerusalem ! ”

Then the Lord will administer justice between the various  
nations,  
And will be arbiter amongst the great heathen powers ;  
Then they will hammer their swords into plough-shares,  
And their lances into pruning-knives—  
Nation will no longer lift sword against nation ;  
There shall be no more armaments, nor training for war.

Each under his own vine shall they sit in that age,  
Each under his own fig-tree ;  
And no one shall cause them to tremble with terror—  
Such is the future which Yahweh has planned.

(Though all the heathen peoples go on walking each in the name of his own god, yet we will walk in the name of Yahweh our God for ever and ever.)

## **Eighth Poem.**

*Chapter iv., verses 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.*

*The next piece was written at some time when Jerusalem was threatened with capture by a foreign power. Possibly it comes from the years just before 586 B.C., when the city was sacked by the Babylonians. The hope of ultimate restoration is*

*repeated in the final verses as rearranged, beginning with verses 9-10, which seem to have been copied out of order in the MSS. used by our Bibles.*

Why do you shriek aloud ?

Have you no longer a king ?

Has your great statesman perished,

That pains like those of child-birth have seized you ?

Twist yourself in agony like one in birth-pangs, O daughter of Sion,

For now you must go forth from the city, and must dwell in the open fields.

You shall go as far as Babylon—there you shall be rescued ;

There Yahweh will buy you back out of the grasp of your enemies.

“ In that day,” such is Yahweh’s promise,

“ I will gather up the maimed,

And I will draw the outcast back to me,—

Her to whom I had done harm.”

“ And I will make the maimed one a cherished favourite,

And the exiled one a mighty people ;

And Yahweh shall rule over them on Sion’s Hill,

From now on and for ever.”

“ And you, O guard-tower of the flock !

Hill-top of Sion’s daughter !

To you will come the principal dominion of all,

The empire of the House of Israel.”

## **Ninth Poem.**

*Chapter iv., verses 11-13.*

*A poem predicting the triumph of Israel, not in the spirit of the previous ode, as missionary, but as military victor. Date and author unknown. Possibly from the dark days of the Early Persian period (520-400 B.C.). Israel is pictured as an iron-horned cow, crushing the heathen peoples beneath her feet as cattle crush the sheaves on the threshing-floor. The simile is a very common one in the prophets, and is taken from*

*ordinary religious usage, which, in the same way, spoke of Yahweh, the Israelite god, as the husband of the nation, "the Bull of Jacob". The bull and cow were familiar religious symbols in Egypt and Babylonia, as in India to-day.*

And now there are assembled against you  
Many nations, who are saying : " Let her be profaned ;  
And let our eyes gaze upon Sion ! "  
But as for them, they do not understand the intentions of  
the Lord,  
And they do not comprehend his purpose  
In gathering them like sheaves to his threshing-floor.

" Arise and thresh, O daughter of Sion !  
For I will make your horns of iron,  
And I will make your hoofs of bronze ;  
And you shall crush many nations to fragments,  
And shall devote their spoil to Yahweh,  
And their wealth to the Master of the Earth."

*Chapter v., verse 1.*

*An odd fragment in prose. Written in some time of national stress.*

Now you are cutting yourself terribly as a sign of frantic mourning. They lay a siege against us ; with a rod they strike the ruler of Israel upon the cheek.

## **Tenth Poem.**

*Chapter v., verses 2-4.*

*The following four poems are contained in Chapter v. of our Hebrew and English Bibles. The first (verses 1-3) is very familiar to us because it was freely used by the early Christians and the writers of the New Testament as a proof-text or "testimony", and was believed to refer to the birth of the Messiah at Bethlehem, and to have been fulfilled at the Nativity (Luke, Chapter ii). Although the word Bethlehem seems to be a marginal note, yet Beth Ephratha is the same*

*place. The poem is undoubtedly a Messianic prediction, and to this extent the most recent scholarship is in line with the traditional use of the poem by Christians.*

And as for you, Beth Ephratha,  
Most insignificant of all the divisions of Judah !  
From you One shall come forth for me,  
Destined to be the Ruler of Israel ;  
Whose pedigree is ancient, going very far back ;

*In the middle of the ode comes a marginal note by a later writer, apparently insisting on the transitory nature of present distresses, in view of the certain, though delayed, coming of the Messiah.*

(Therefore he will allow them to continue until she who is to bear a child shall have borne ; then the remainder of his clansmen shall come back again to the Tribe of Israel.)

And he will stand forth and act as shepherd in the name of  
Yahweh,  
In the glorious beauty of the name of Yahweh, his God,  
For now Yahweh's grandeur shall be apparent to the very  
ends of the earth.

## Eleventh Poem.

*Chapter v., verses 5, 6.*

*The coming golden age of Israel's victory. The mention of Assyria would point to the eighth century as the date of writing, did we not know that the name is often used by later writers in a cryptic sense to indicate other foreign oppressors.*

And this will be our security against Assyria,  
When he shall come into our country ;  
When he shall set foot on our soil ;  
Then we will set up against him seven shepherds—  
Eight champions of mankind :  
And they shall shepherd the land of Assyria with the sword,  
And the land of Nimrod with the cutlass ;  
They will rescue us from Assyria,  
When he shall come into our country,  
And when he shall set foot within our frontier.

## Twelfth Poem.

*Chapter v., verses 7, 8.*

*The third poem in this chapter glorifies the Remnant (the name given to themselves by the exiles who carried on the prophetic teaching in Babylonia). It seems to have been written in Babylonia after 586 B.C., and pictures the re-emergence of the Remnant, first as an inevitable divinely-guided phenomenon, like dew and rain, and secondly as a resistless force, like a lion hunting prey.*

Then the Remnant of Jacob shall be among the pagans,  
In the midst of many heathen peoples ;  
Like dew that comes from Yahweh,  
Like showers upon the turf :  
Which do not wait upon human action,  
Nor are hastened or delayed by what men may do.

Then the Remnant of Jacob shall be among the pagans,  
In the midst of many heathen peoples ;  
Like a lion before whom the jungle-beasts scatter,  
Like a partly-grown lion among the sheep-flocks.  
Who, if he shall range abroad,  
Will trample and tear, and none dare rescue.

## Thirteenth Poem.

*Chapter v., verses 10-15.*

*In the fourth poem of the chapter we have again a piece remarkably like, though not this time identical with, one included in the roll of Isaiah, namely, the ode in Chapter ii., especially verse 7. The teaching also resembles that of the first Isaiah or of Jeremiah. It is pure idealist pacifism, urging that the true defences of the state are the performance of social justice and trust in Israel's god. Armaments and fortifications are as much heathen practices as is idol-worship, and both are displeasing to Yahweh, and actually prevent him from protecting his own people.*

And it shall be in that day, so Yahweh declares, that :  
“ I will do away with your chariot-horses from your midst,  
And will destroy your chariots ;  
I will do away with the walled-cities of your country,  
And will pull down your fortresses.”

“ I will snatch the divining crystals out of your grasp,  
And there shall be no more mediums among you ;  
I will remove all your idols and images,  
You shall bow down no more to your own handiwork.”

“ I will root up your wooden goddess-poles,  
And will destroy your sacred groves ;  
And I will do vengeance with anger and fury,  
Upon the disobedient pagans.”

*The next three poems form Chapter vi. in our Hebrew and English Bibles. They seem to come from the period of Ezra (? 398 B.C.) or later, since there are references to the stories in the Pentateuch, and exhortations to the faithful to remember God's guidance of his people in the past as set forth therein. We have also the teaching typical of KINGS and DEUTERONOMY which regarded the régime of Omri and Ahab as one of apostasy and reversion to heathenism.*

## **Fourteenth Poem.**

*Chapter vi., verses 1-5.*

Hear now the word  
Which Yahweh has spoken ;  
Arise, plead with the mountains,  
Let the hills hear your voice !

Hear, O mountains, the contention of Yahweh,  
Give ear, O foundations of the earth ;  
For there is a contention between Yahweh and his people,  
He is wrestling in argument with Israel.

“ O my people, what have I done to you ?  
How is it that I have wearied you ? Answer me !  
For 'twas I who brought you up from the land of Egypt,  
And redeemed you from the place of slavery ! ”

“ O my people ! Remember what Balak advised,  
And the answer which Balaam gave to him !  
And all the road from Shittim to Gilgal,  
That you may appreciate the victorious march of Yahweh ! ”

*The words “ king of Moab ”, “ son of Beor ”, and “ I sent before you Moses, Aaron and Miriam ”, seem to have been added as marginal notes to the above poem by some rather pedantic person, anxious to display his erudition.*

## Fifteenth Poem.

*Chapter vi., verses 6-8.*

*The next poem is, of course, the best known in the collection ; it seems to be in the finest spirit of post-exilic piety, and accords well with such passages as Ps. xl. 6, Ps. l. 8, 9, or with the books of RUTH and JONAH. There are those who would place it earlier. No definite decision is possible.*

With what offering shall I present myself before Yahweh ?  
With what gift bow myself before the God of heaven ?  
Shall I present myself with burnt-sacrifices ?  
Shall I bring yearling bulls ?

Will Yahweh be made favourable by thousands of rams ?  
Or by floods of melted fat ?  
Shall I offer my eldest child for my fault ?  
The issue of my body for my own sin ?

O man ! He has told you what goodness really is !  
What is it then that Yahweh expects from you,  
If not being fair to everyone, and loving to be generous,  
And walking with your God in unassuming modesty ?

## Sixteenth Poem.

*Chapter vi., verses 9-16.*

*In the following poem Yahweh is the speaker, the city probably Jerusalem, and the date the fifth or fourth century. If the piece be eighth century work, then the city is presumably Samaria. The present text is in fearful disorder, and it has been necessary to take out a great many later notes which have crept into it in order to make sense of the passage.*

The voice of Yahweh—he is calling to the city !

“Hear, O clan ! Listen, O city-assembly !

Whose wealthy men continually oppress others !

Whose citizens speak falsehood ! ”

“Can I forget the treasures piled up in bad men’s houses ?

And the short measure ? Curse it !

Can I treat as a man of integrity one whose scales weigh falsely ?

One who has a bag of unjust weights ? ”

“Now, then, I will begin to chastise you,

To lay you in ruins because of your sins ;

You shall draw away, but yet shall not rescue,

And what you do rescue I will hand over to the sword.”

“You shall eat yet never have enough,

You shall sow and shall not reap ;

You shall press the olives, and shall not enjoy the oil,

You shall tread out the grape-juice, and never drink the wine.”

“For you have followed the customs of Omri,

And all that the house of Ahab did ;

So that I am forced to give you up to destruction,

And to hand over your citizens to mockery.”

## Seventeenth Poem.

*Chapter vii., verses 1-6.*

*Four poems—one of lament and three singing courageously of ultimate restoration—close the roll, and form Chapter vii*

*of our Hebrew and English Bibles. The general style and subject of the first suggest that it may be by the same author as the last in Chapter vi.*

Alas for me ! For I am become  
Like windfall dates, or the small grapes left on the vines ;  
There's not a single bunch worth eating,  
Not one really luscious purple fig !

The truly devout have died out from the land,  
There's not an upright man left in the country ;  
They all lie in ambush, one for another ;  
Every one tries to snare his neighbour.

They've got their hands ready to do wrong ;  
The prince is asking for a bribe ;  
The magnate follows his own interest ;  
Their very good they have turned to evil.

Goodness with them is like a thorn-bush,  
Their uprightness resembles a brier-hedge !  
The day of their visitation is at hand,  
Even now their lamentation is here !

Have no trust in a friend,  
Do not rely on a companion ;  
Keep the door of your mouth  
From her that lies in your bosom !

For a son blackguards his father,  
A daughter stands up against her mother ;  
A daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law,  
The members of his own household are a man's enemies.

*By household is meant here, as generally in the Old Testament, the house-family or joint-family, in which the sons and grandsons all live with their wives in the same group of buildings, under the control of the head of the family, and supported by the common funds and the undivided estate. In such communities, as to-day in India and China, there is frequently much dissension, especially between the grandmother and the younger women.*

## **Eighteenth Poem.**

*Chapter vi., verses 7-10.*

*A poem foretelling the ultimate triumph of Yahweh's people. Probably written during the period of depression following the Exile. It is much like some of the Psalms.*

As for me, I will be on the watch for Yahweh,  
I will look out eagerly for my saviour God,  
Certainly he will hear me !

Don't rejoice over me, O my enemy !  
Though I have fallen, I shall rise ;  
Though I may be sitting in darkness,  
Yet Yahweh is a light to me !

I will endure the anger of Yahweh,  
For I have sinned against him ;  
Until he shall plead my cause,  
And shall see justice done to me.

He will bring me forth to the light,  
I shall see his vindication of me !  
Then my enemy will see,  
And shame will cover her.

She, namely, who said to me :  
" Where is Yahweh your God ? "  
My eye will see her trampled  
Like mud in the streets !

## **Nineteenth Poem.**

*Chapter vii., verses 11-13.*

*Another poem foretelling the rebuilding of Jerusalem, which is to become a world-capital. The wicked and rebellious will be destroyed. Written perhaps about 520 B.C., when Zechariah and Haggai were prophesying. The poem is addressed to the city of Jerusalem.*

A day for the building of your walls !  
On that day your frontier will be far distant !  
On that day they will come to you,  
From Assyria to as far as Egypt,

And from Egypt back again to the Euphrates ;  
And from sea to sea,  
From mountain range to mountain range.  
And the earth will become a waste  
On account of the dwellers in it ;  
Because of the fruit of their doings.

## Twentieth Poem.

*Chapter vii., verses 14-20.*

*A poem-prayer to Yahweh. He is reminded, in the true Old Testament manner, of his guidance of his people in the past, and he is begged to restore them to his favour. This poem also comes from the post-exilic period, when the idea of God's guidance in history had become a cardinal dogma of the faith, and the Pentateuchal stories were familiar and dear to every devout Jew.*

Shepherd your people with your staff—the flock which is your heritage !  
Which lives lonely in the forest-country, all along the hill-sides !  
May they graze in Bashan and Gilead, as in days of old !  
As in the days of the coming forth from Egypt ; show us wondrous workings !  
May the heathen see and be ashamed of all their vauntings !  
Let them lay their hand on their mouth ! Let their ear be deaf !  
May they lick the dust like the snake, like beasts that crawl on the earth !  
May they come trembling from their holes ; may they quake and fear before you !  
Who is a God like you, forgiving wrong, and passing by evil-doing ?

(He does not keep his anger ; rather does he delight in loving-kindness ; he will turn again, he will have mercy on us, he will tread down our wrong-doings.)

And you will cast into the depths of the sea, all of our sins.  
You will keep faith with Jacob, and be gracious to Abraham ;  
As you swore to our fathers from the days of old.



# THE BOOK OF HABAKKUK

TRANSLATED INTO COLLOQUIAL ENGLISH BY  
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## INTRODUCTION.

THE Book of Habakkuk is one of the noblest products of Hebrew prophecy, as all who study it are free to admit ; yet its interpretation is of some difficulty. Nothing is certainly known of the prophet whose name it bears, except what may be gathered from this book. His very name does not seem to be a Hebrew word. Different opinions are held as to the situation to which the prophecy is addressed, depending largely on what arrangement of its several sections be adopted. On this depends also the interpretation of the religious teaching of the book.

The Hebrew text itself has become corrupt in many places in the course of its transmission, as will be seen from the foot-notes to the following translation. The oldest Hebrew manuscripts we now possess are some fifteen centuries later than Habakkuk. Even with the help of the Versions (Greek, Syriac, and other translations, made from much older Hebrew texts than those which survive to-day), the original text cannot be ascertained with certainty. In some cases we have to resort to conjectural emendations which take into account, not only the present Hebrew text, but the testimony of the Versions as to the Hebrew from which they were translated, as well as the general sense of the passage.

The book falls into six clearly defined sections, namely :— I.—Chapter i. 2-4 ; II.—i. 5-11 ; III.—i. 12-17 ; IV.—ii. 1-4 ; V.—ii. 5-20 ; VI.—iii. Chapter iii. is a psalm, quite distinct from the prophetic portion of the book, and has to be considered separately.

The usual interpretation of Habakkuk, based on the present arrangement of the sections, is roughly as follows :—In Section I. the prophet complains to God of cruelty, lawlessness and social disorder generally within Judah. The Divine reply in Section

II. points to the coming of the Chaldeans, and describes their fierceness in war, a fierceness which Judah is soon to feel. In Section III. the prophet complains a second time to the Almighty, this time of a moral anomaly. The Chaldeans, instruments of Divine justice, prove to be more wicked than those they are sent to punish. The answer to this question, as given in Section IV., is the principal message of the prophecy: the declaration of the moral and spiritual principle that evil, wherever found, bears in itself the seeds of ruin, while goodness by its very nature must survive. Section V. is a series of taunting songs, in which the prophet proclaims repeated woes upon the rapacious invaders. This is the simplest interpretation of the book, and, the present writer believes, it lies open to the fewest objections, and provides the only adequate setting for the great declaration of Chapter ii. 4.

We may date the prophecy with some certainty, from internal evidence. That it comes from a period of great laxity in religion and in public morality, is obvious from Section I. Of the two reigns which fall in the period of the Chaldean supremacy, before the fall of Jerusalem, those of Josiah and Jehoiakim, this would certainly point to the latter (608 B.C.-598 B.C.). In Section II. the Chaldeans are just on the horizon of Judah, a situation which reflects the period just after they had overthrown Nineveh (612 B.C.), and defeated Pharaoh Necho II. of Egypt at Carchemish (605 B.C.). In fact these very words may echo the rumours of the Egyptian defeat which alarmed Jerusalem. We would then date Sections I. and II. about 604 B.C. In Section III. Judah seems to have had closer acquaintance with the Chaldean methods of warfare. This would require an interval of several years, and would give 601-600 B.C. as the approximate date of the latter part of the prophecy. It should be added, however, that many scholars date the book in the Greek period, believing that the invaders described in Chapter i. are the armies of Alexander the Great, which passed down the Palestinian coast in the autumn of 332 B.C.

In conclusion, a few words must be said about the religious teaching of the book, to ascertain which is the real purpose of our study. In the first place, we see here a man who dares to question God, demanding an answer to the anomalies of religious and moral experience. Religious truth, we are often

reminded, comes not by reason but by revelation, yet it is a fact to be pondered that it is to those who think that revelation comes. The Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure *hid* in a field, and only they find it who seek it.

Again, we are shown clearly in this book that outward prosperity is no criterion of well-being. The success which comes to wicked men, and, still more, the sufferings of the righteous, have always been perplexing problems for those who believe that God is good. The difficulty lies in our materialistic conceptions of good and evil, of life and death. If we will but recognise that reality is spiritual, that moral death is infinitely worse than physical suffering, and conversely, that a life lived according to God's will is the life that is life indeed, our problem is largely solved. That is the message at the heart of this book: the evil-doer is perishing while he lives, but goodness is deathless because it is divine.

Finally, we have here the Old Testament source of the New Testament assertion: "The just shall live by faith." The Hebrew word means rather "faithfulness", but the LXX translators rendered it "faith", and so St. Paul quoted it. But though the Hebrew and Greek words differ somewhat in meaning, the thought behind the verse is much the same in both Testaments. Faithfulness in goodness is only possible by utter dependence on God, and that is faith. Faithfulness through faith—that is eternal life.

N.B.—The following abbreviations are used in the notes to the translation which follows :—

*MT*—Massoretic Text, the present Hebrew text. *LXX*—The Septuagint, or Alexandrian Greek Version. *Syr.*—The Syriac Version. *Targ.*—The Targum, or Aramaic Paraphrase to the Old Testament. *Vulg.*—The Latin Vulgate Version of Jerome. *Symm.*—The Greek Version of Symmachus. *Aqu.*—The Greek Version of Aquila. *MS.*—Manuscript.

# HABAKKUK

*The Title—Chapter i. verse 1.*

The oracle which Habakkuk the prophet saw when in ecstasy.

*Section I.—A Complaint of Internal Social Disorder—Chapter i. verses 2-4.*

How long, O Yahweh, must I continue to cry out for help, and Thou turn a deaf ear? in my need to call "Violence!", and Thou do not save? Why dost Thou show me only evil and weariness, and make me to endure the sight of ruin and wrong? Quarrelling goes on before me, and contention raises its head. Because of this the prophetic law is helpless, and a right judgment is never given; bad men outnumber good men, so that justice miscarries.

*Section II.—The Divine Response—the Coming of the Chaldeans—Chapter i. verses 5-11.*

Look, you traitors<sup>1</sup>, and see what will greatly astonish you: for I am doing a deed in your days, which you will not believe even when you are told all about it. See—I am about to raise the Chaldeans, a fierce and impetuous people, who go through the length and breadth of the earth, seizing men's homes that do not belong to them. Awful and fearful are they; they set their own standards of justice and dignity. Their horses, too, are swifter than leopards, and keener than wolves at nightfall<sup>2</sup>. Their cavalry come far in<sup>3</sup> the distance; they swoop like a vulture eager for its prey. Their coming is solely for violence; <sup>4</sup>before them blows the scorching Sirocco<sup>4</sup>; they gather in captives like sand. For kings they care nothing, princes they

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<sup>1</sup> So LXX, Syr., etc., cf. Ch. i. 13. MT "among the nations" is from a confusion of two similar letters.

<sup>2</sup> MT adds, "their horsemen press proudly on"; omit with Syr.

<sup>3</sup> MT "from".

<sup>4-4</sup> MT obscure; conjecture from Vulg., Symm. and one MS. of LXX.

scoff at ; they laugh at all strongholds, heap up earthworks<sup>1</sup> and take them. <sup>2</sup>Then like a wind they sweep on<sup>2</sup>, they pass by and are appeased ; this might of theirs becomes their god.

*Section III.—A New Perplexity : the Chaldeans are more wicked than those they are sent to punish.—Chapter i. verses 12-17.*

Art Thou not from everlasting, O Yahweh ? My holy God, <sup>3</sup>Thou art not mortal !<sup>3</sup> Thou, Yahweh, hast decreed their judgment ; O Rock, Thou art the foundation of their rebuke. Thine eyes are too pure to look on evil ; Thou canst not endure the sight of mischief.

Why, then, dost Thou look on while traitors betray ? And art silent when bad men swallow up better men than themselves ? Thou dost make men to be like fish of the sea, like wriggling things without a leader. <sup>4</sup>Other men<sup>4</sup> drag them all away in their net ; they sweep them into their net ; they pull them up on fish-hooks, exulting in the sport.

And so they sacrifice to their net, and their mesh they worship with incense ; for by these is secured their wealth, and food in abundance.

<sup>5</sup>Will they draw sword forever ?<sup>5</sup> Will they never cease to slay nations without mercy ?

*Section IV.—The Divine Declaration ; a Principle of Life.—Chapter ii. verses 1-4.*

I shall stand at my point of vantage, and station myself on the rampart, that I may watch to see what He will say to me, and what reply He<sup>6</sup> will make to my complaint.

And Yahweh answered me in these words : “ Write the vision plainly on tablets, so that a running man may read it. For the

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<sup>1</sup> MT “ dust ”.

<sup>2—2</sup> MT “ then a wind sweeps on ”.

<sup>3—3</sup> Scribal tradition for MT “ we shall not die ”.

<sup>4—4</sup> MT “ they ”.

<sup>5—5</sup> Conjecture from context ; MT “ shall they not therefore empty their net ? ”

<sup>6</sup> So Syr. MT “ I ”.

vision will yet be realised when the day comes ; it will appear<sup>1</sup> finally without fail : though it seem tardy, wait for it ; it will surely come, not a moment late. See—<sup>2</sup>the wrong-doer shall come to a godless grave<sup>2</sup>, but the good man shall live on by his faithfulness.”

*Section V.—A Series of Taunting Songs over Evil-doers.—Chapter ii. verses 5-20.*

<sup>3</sup>WOE to the proud<sup>3</sup> traitor ! He is haughty and insatiable<sup>4</sup> ; his desire is wide as the underworld, like Death he is never satisfied ; he sweeps up all nations, and gathers in to him all the peoples. Will not all these raise a tale about him, and set going a mysterious taunt-song ?

WOE to him who prospers by others' possessions, who piles up debts he can never pay ! Suddenly your creditors will take action, they will wake up and make you tremble : you in turn will be *their* prey ! Because you have plundered many nations, all the rest of the peoples will plunder you ; because of the human blood you have shed, and the ravaging of country and town, and of their inhabitants.

WOE to him who builds his fortune on cruelty, <sup>5</sup>who crushes his neighbour's home<sup>5</sup> that he may build high his own nest, and so escape the hand of evil ! Shame on such a scheme for your home—to cut off many peoples is a sin against your soul. The very stone will cry out from the wall (of that house), and a knot<sup>6</sup> from its timbers will echo the cry.

WOE to him who builds a city on bloodshed, who founds a town on rapacious cruelty ! Do not whole peoples labour to weariness (<sup>7</sup>such is the will of Yahweh of hosts !<sup>7</sup>), only to have the fire consume what they make ? Do not nations faint in the

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<sup>1</sup> Conjecture on basis of LXX, Vulg., Syr. ; MT " pant ".

<sup>2—2</sup> Conjecture on basis of LXX, Aqu., Vulg., Targ., Syr. ; MT is unintelligible.

<sup>3—3</sup> Conjecture from LXX ; MT unintelligible.

<sup>4</sup> Conjecture from LXX ; MT " that keepeth not at home ".

<sup>5—5</sup> Conjecture ; MT uncertain.

<sup>6</sup> A word of very doubtful meaning.

<sup>7—7</sup> Marginal comment of some scribe.

struggle for an empty prize? <sup>1</sup>Yet the earth shall fully know the glory of Yahweh, as the waters fully cover the sea.<sup>1</sup>

WOE to him who teaches his neighbour to drink, that he may make him drunk with <sup>2</sup>the poured out wine of his fury,<sup>2</sup> to make of him a shameful exhibition! Yet you shall have disgrace instead of honour! The cup from Yahweh's right hand shall come round the circle to *you*—it shall be your turn to drink and stagger<sup>3</sup>;—foul shame shall be yours in place of glory. For the violence of Lebanon shall overwhelm you, the depredations of the wild beasts shall dismay you; because of the human blood you have shed, and the ravaging of country and town, and of their inhabitants. What use will the carved idol be to the man who carves it, or the molten image (<sup>4</sup>liar that it is!<sup>4</sup>) to the man who has formed it and trusts in it,—and so goes on making dumb and worthless idols?

WOE to him who says to such wood "Wake up!", and to silent stone "Come to life!" (<sup>5</sup>that is his teacher<sup>5</sup>). It may be sheathed in gold and silver, but there is not a breath of life in it. But Yahweh *is* in His holy temple; let the whole earth be hushed in His presence!

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### THE PSALM—INTRODUCTION.

In Chapter III we have the unique phenomenon of a psalm having become attached to a prophetic book, though distinct from it in purpose, form and content. A liturgical footnote tells us that it once belonged to "The Director's Collection", with many other psalms now found in the Psalter. The theophany, or poetic description of the Divine power as seen in the convulsions of Nature, is a well-known feature of a certain type of psalm (e.g., Psalms xviii. and xxix.).

That such a psalm should have become attached to this prophecy can be explained only by the existence of a strong tradition that Habakkuk was the author of both, even though they are distinct works. It is interesting to note that Psalms cxlvi.-cl. are ascribed to Haggai and Zechariah, in the LXX, though retaining their place in the Psalter. Such psalm titles, however, are

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<sup>1</sup>—<sup>1</sup> Probably quoted from Isa. xi. 9.

<sup>2</sup>—<sup>2</sup> Conjecture, from LXX, Aqu., Symm., Vulg., Syr., etc.

<sup>3</sup> So LXX, Syr., Vulg. MT "be uncircumcised", a similar word.

<sup>4</sup>—<sup>4</sup> Probably scribal comment.

<sup>5</sup>—<sup>5</sup> Perhaps scribal comment.

almost certainly later additions, and cannot be taken as settling the question of authorship.

The date of the psalm may be inferred to be under the monarchy, from the reference in verse 13 to "Thine anointed", unless, as some hold, this refers to the people of Israel as a whole. Further precision is impossible.

*Section VI.—God's Power seen in a Thunderstorm ; the Psalmist Alarmed but Confident.—Chapter iii. verses 1-19.*

A liturgical prayer, ascribed to Habakkuk the prophet. Set to stirring music.

O Yahweh, I have heard Thy report,  
    <sup>1</sup>I have seen Thy work and have feared ;  
O Yahweh<sup>1</sup>, be known here and now,  
    In anger be mindful of mercy.

God comes even now from the Southland,  
    From mountains of Paran the Holy One ; (musical  
    mark)

His splendour has covered the heavens,  
    The earth is filled with thanksgiving.

<sup>2</sup>His brightness appears as the lightning,  
    The flashes come out from His hand.

In the heavens He setteth His glory,  
    <sup>3</sup>There, where His might is concealed<sup>3</sup>.

Out from His presence goes pestilence,  
    Thunder-bolts dart from His feet.

He stood, and the earth quaked<sup>4</sup> beneath Him,  
    He looked, and the nations were startled ;

The ancient mountains were shattered,  
    Hills that were age-old bowed down,  
    Eternal paths for His feet.

In Cushan the tents were disturbed<sup>5</sup>,  
    Tent-curtains quivered in Midian.

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<sup>1</sup>—<sup>1</sup> Conjecture from LXX ; MT corrupt.

<sup>2</sup> Word inserted from LXX, Syr., Targ., Vulg.

<sup>3</sup>—<sup>3</sup> Not in Hebrew. Suggested from material in LXX, Aqu., Symm., and in similar psalms. It may have dropped out owing to similarity of Hebrew words for "set" and "there".

<sup>4</sup> So LXX, Targ. ; MT "He measured".

<sup>5</sup> Conjecture ; MT corrupt.

Art Thou angry with rivers, O Yahweh ?<sup>1</sup>  
 Does Thy fury extend to the sea,  
 That Thou dost ride out on Thy horses,  
 And in Thy victorious chariots ?  
<sup>2</sup>Thou hast made bare the length of Thy bow,  
 And filled up Thy quiver with arrows.  
 Thou didst cleave the rivers, O Yahweh<sup>2</sup>,  
 The earth, Thou hast rent it asunder.  
 The mountains writhed when they saw Thee,  
<sup>3</sup>The cloud-banks poured rain down in torrents<sup>3</sup> ;  
 To the roar of the primæval ocean  
<sup>4</sup>The sound of Thy thunder responded<sup>4</sup>.  
 The sun <sup>5</sup>was eclipsed in his shining<sup>5</sup>,  
 The moon stopped aloft in her place ;  
 With flame Thine arrows flew flashing,  
 Thy spear glittered bright in the lightning.  
 Thy march through the land was indignant,  
 Thou didst trample the nations in anger.  
 Thou didst come to deliver Thy people,  
 The champion of Thine anointed,  
 To smite <sup>6</sup>with death<sup>6</sup> the head of the wicked,  
<sup>7</sup>To lay him bare to the neck in correction<sup>7</sup>. (musi-  
 cal mark)  
<sup>8</sup>With Thy staff hast Thou pierced through his head<sup>8</sup>,  
<sup>9</sup>Like chaff is he, whirled from the threshing<sup>9</sup>,  
<sup>10</sup>Whose delight is to swallow the righteous<sup>10</sup>,  
 To devour the needy in secret.  
 Through the sea Thou didst walk with Thine horses,  
 While afar many waters <sup>11</sup>were foaming<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Repetition in MT omitted.

<sup>2—2</sup> Uncertain Hebrew text restored with help of LXX.

<sup>3—3</sup> Slight change from MT, cf Psalm lxxvii. 17.

<sup>4—4</sup> MT corrupt ; conjecture from Ps. lxxvii. 18.

<sup>5—5</sup> Literally " lifted up its light " ; Hebrew difficult.

<sup>6—6</sup> So LXX.

<sup>7—7</sup> MT uncertain ; conjecture from Versions.

<sup>8—8</sup> MT " The head with his staff ".

<sup>9—9</sup> Conjecture from Hebrew letters and Hosea xiii. 3.

<sup>10—10</sup> Conjecture from difficult text.

<sup>11—11</sup> So many MSS. of LXX.

I heard, and my body did tremble,  
 My lips quivered quick at the sound ;  
 (As if) rottenness entered my bones,  
<sup>1</sup>My steps<sup>1</sup> were uncertain beneath me.  
 Yet peace shall be mine in distress,  
<sup>2</sup>When trouble comes on the nations<sup>2</sup>.  
 Though there <sup>3</sup>be no fruit<sup>3</sup> on the fig-tree,  
 And no vintage appear on the grape-vines ;  
 Though the olive-tree fail in its bearing,  
 And nothing be found of the field-crops ;  
 Though the sheep-folds be empty of sheep,  
 And the stables be void of the oxen ;  
 Even so, I shall triumph in Yahweh,  
 And rejoice in the God Who will save me.  
 My strength is in Yahweh my Lord,  
 He has made my feet nimble as hinds' feet,  
 He has guided my steps on the<sup>4</sup> heights.

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From the Director's Collection. To be sung with stringed  
 accompaniment.

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1—<sup>1</sup> MT "as to which".

2—<sup>2</sup> Conjecture from corrupt MT.

3—<sup>3</sup> For Hebrew "spring up".

4 Omitting "my", with LXX.